Hanseatic League 1159 - 1666

“Medieval Merchants Of the Hanseatic League”
This is a historical work
based on public documents
with edits, notes, images, arrangement
by Larry W Jones

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First edition - 2023

Book design by Larry W Jones

Published by lulu.com

ISBN – 978-1-312-25366-7

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INTRODUCTION

Hanse is the **Old High German** word for a band or troop. This word was applied to bands of merchants traveling between the Hanseatic cities, whether by land or by sea. Hanse in **Middle Low German** came to mean a society of merchants or a trader guild.

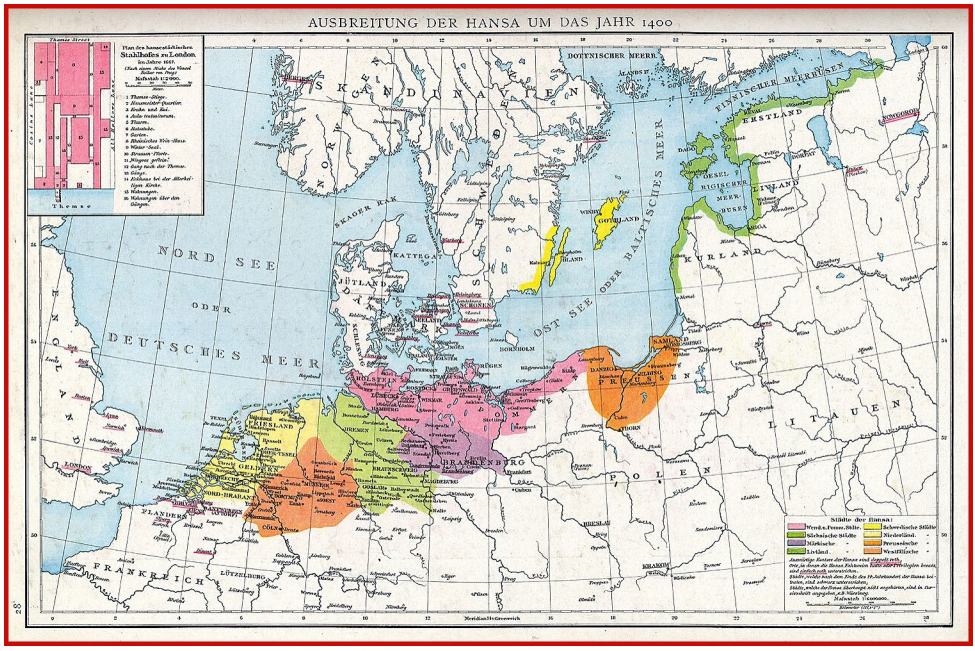
(**Note**) ***Old High German*** *is the earliest stage of the German language, conventionally identified as the period from around 500/750 to 1050. Rather than representing a single supra-regional form of German, Old High German encompasses the numerous West Germanic dialects that had undergone the set of consonantal changes called the Second Sound Shift.*

(**Note**) ***Middle Low German*** *or Middle Saxon is a developmental stage of Low German. It developed from the Old Saxon language in the Middle Ages and has been documented in writing since about 1225. During the Hanseatic period (from about 1300 to about 1600), Middle Low German was the leading written language in the north of Central Europe and served as a lingua franca in the northern half of Europe. It was used parallel to medieval Latin also for purposes of diplomacy and for deeds.*

The Hanseatic League was a **medieval** commercial and defensive confederation of merchant guilds and market towns in Central and Northern Europe. Growing from a few North German towns in the late 12th century, the League expanded between the 13th and 15th centuries and ultimately encompassed nearly 200 settlements across seven modern-day countries, ranging from Estonia in the north and east, to the Netherlands in the west, and Kraków, Poland, in the south. The League originated from various loose associations of German traders and towns formed to advance mutual commercial interests, such as protection against robbers. These arrangements gradually coalesced into the Hanseatic League, whose traders enjoyed toll privileges and protection in affiliated communities and their trade routes. Economic interdependence and kinship ties between merchant families, who held important positions in towns, led to deeper political integration and the removal of obstacles to trade.

(**Note**) *The* ***medieval period*** *lasted approximately from the late 5th to the late 15th centuries, aligning with the post-classical period of global history. It began with the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD and ended with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD before transitioning into the Renaissance and then the Age of Discovery. The Middle Ages is the middle period of the three traditional divisions of Western history: antiquity, medieval, and modern. The medieval period is itself subdivided into the Early, High, and Late Middle Ages.*

Hanseatic Cities gradually developed common trade regulations. During its heydays, the Hanseatic League dominated maritime trade in the North and Baltic Seas. It established trading posts in numerous towns and cities across Europe; some of these, like the Kontors in London, Bruges, Bergen, and Novgorod, became extraterritorial entities that enjoyed considerable legal autonomy. Hanseatic merchants, called Hansards, operated in basic private companies and were widely known for their access to a variety of commodities, and enjoyed privileges and protections abroad. The collective economic power made the League capable of imposing blockades and even waging war against kingdoms and principalities.



Northern Europe in the 1400s, showing the extent of the Hanseatic League

Even at its zenith, the Hanseatic League was never more than a loosely aligned confederation of city-states. It lacked a permanent administrative body, a treasury, and a standing military force. In the 14th century, the Hanseatic League instated an irregular negotiating diet (Middle Low German: dachvart or dach; German: Tagfahrt or Hansetag) that operated on deliberation and consensus. By the mid-16th century, these weak connections left the Hanseatic League vulnerable, and it gradually unraveled as members became consolidated into other realms or departed, ultimately disintegrating in 1669.

The Hanseatic League used several types of ships that sailed over seas and on rivers. The most emblematic type was the cog. Knowing great diversity in construction, it was depicted on Hanseatic seals and coats of arms. By the end of the Middle Ages, the cog was replaced by other types like the hulk, which later gave way to larger carvel types.

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

HISTORY

Exploratory trading adventures, raids, and piracy occurred early throughout the Baltic Sea; the sailors of **Gotland** sailed up rivers as far away as Novgorod, which was a major trade centre of Rus'. Scandinavians led international trade in the Baltic area before the Hanseatic League, establishing major trading hubs at Birka, Haithabu, and Schleswig by the 9th century CE. The later Hanseatic ports between Mecklenburg and Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad) originally formed part of the Scandinavian-led Baltic trade-system.

(**Note**) ***Gotland***, *also historically spelled Gottland or Gothland is Sweden's largest island. It is also a province/county, municipality, and diocese. The province includes the islands of Fårö and Gotska Sandön to the north, as well as the Karlsö Islands (Lilla and Stora) to the west.*

The Hanseatic League was never formally founded, so it lacks a date of founding. Historians traditionally traced its origins to the rebuilding of the north German town of Lübeck in 1159 by the powerful Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria, after he had captured the area from Adolf II, Count of Schauenburg and Holstein. More recent scholarship has deemphasized the focus on Lübeck, viewing it as one of several regional trading centers, and presenting the League as the combination of a north German trading system oriented on the Baltic and a Rhinelandic trading system targeting England and Flanders.

German cities achieved domination of trade in the Baltic with striking speed during the 13th century, and Lübeck became a central node in the seaborne trade that linked the areas around the North and Baltic seas. The hegemony of Lübeck peaked during the 15th century.

Well before the term Hanse appeared in a document in 1267, merchants in different cities began to form guilds, or hansas, with the intention of trading with towns overseas, especially in the economically less-developed eastern Baltic. This area could supply timber, wax, amber, resins, and furs, along with rye and wheat brought down on barges from the hinterland to port markets. Merchant guilds formed in both hometowns and destination ports as medieval corporations, and despite competition would increasingly cooperate to coalesce into the Hanseatic network of merchant guilds. The dominant language of trade was Middle Low German, which had significant impact on the languages spoken in the area, particularly the larger Scandinavian languages, Estonian Latvian.

Lübeck soon became a base for merchants from Saxony and Westphalia trading eastward and northward; for them, because of its shorter and easier access route and better legal protections, it was a more attractive port than Schleswig. It became a transshipment port for trade between the North Sea and the Baltic too. In addition, Lübeck granted extensive trade privileges to Russian and Scandinavian traders. It was also the main supply port for the Northern Crusades, improving its relations with the Pope. Lübeck gained imperial privileges to become a free imperial city in 1226, under Valdemar II of Denmark during the Danish dominion, as had Hamburg in 1189. Also in this period Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund and Danzig received city charters.

Valdemar II Valdemarsen (28 June 1170 – 28 March 1241), later remembered as Valdemar the Victorious (Danish: Valdemar Sejr), was King of Denmark from 1202 until his death in 1241.

Visby, on the island of Gotland, functioned as the leading centre in the Baltic before the Hansa. Sailing east, Visby merchants established a trading post at Novgorod called Gutagard (also known as Gotenhof) in 1080. Gotland became separate from Sweden after 1120 and allowed traders from the south and west. Merchants from northern Germany from then on stayed there in the early period of the Gotlander settlement, through a treaty with the Visby Hansa. Later, in the first half of the 13th century, they established their own trading station or Kontor in Novgorod, known as the Peterhof, further up the river Volkhov.

Peterhof ("Peter's courtyard"), upper left, was the Hanseatic kontor, one of the four major trading posts of the Hanseatic League, on the right bank of the Volkhov at Novgorod, Russia, then forming the Novgorod Republic. It was named after St. Peter's Church, a Catholic church that was used by the Hanseatic merchants.

Hansa societies worked to remove restrictions on trade for their members. The earliest extant documentary mention (although without a name) of a specific German commercial federation dates between 1173 and 1175 (but commonly misdated to 1157) in London. That year, the merchants of the Hansa in Cologne convinced King Henry II of England to exempt them from all tolls in London and to grant protection to merchants and goods throughout England.

(Note) ***Henry II*** *(5 March 1133 – 6 July 1189) was King of England from 1154 until his death in 1189. He controlled England; substantial parts of Wales and Ireland; and a large part of France. At times, Henry also held a strong influence over Scotland and the Duchy of Brittany.*

German colonists in the 12th and 13th centuries settled in numerous cities on and near the east Baltic coast, such as Elbing (Elbląg), Thorn (Toruń), Reval (Tallinn), Riga, and Dorpat (Tartu), which became members of the Hanseatic League, and some of which still retain many Hansa buildings and bear the style of their Hanseatic days. Most were granted Lübeck law, after the league's most prominent town. The law provided that they had to appeal in all legal matters to Lübeck's city council. Others, like Danzig from 1295, had Magdeburg law or its derivative Culm law. Later the Livonian Confederation of 1435 to c. 1582 incorporated modern-day Estonia and parts of Latvia; all of its major towns were members of the Hanseatic League.

Over the 13th century, older and wealthier long-distance traders increasingly settled in their hometowns as senior trade partners, while they previously became landowners. Already in older times merchants had often begun partnerships or private companies. Factors, who were junior partners or associates, were instead sent to foreign places and settled on location. By the end of the century foreign long-distance trade had developed a division of labor with three roles: the settled senior merchant, the transporter (skipper, carrier or land carter) and the factor abroad. But inside the area of Hanseatic towns travelling representatives were sent on individual trade expeditions. The larger number of settled merchants allowed long-distance traders to influence town policy more, combined with an increased presence of the ministerial class this raised the rank of merchants and enabled them to dominate more cities. This decentralised arrangement was fostered by slow travel speeds, going from Reval to Lübeck took between 4 weeks and, in winter, 4 months.

(**Note**) *Elbląg (Ebling) is one of the oldest cities in the province. Its history dates back to 1237, when the Teutonic Order constructed their fortified stronghold on the banks of a nearby river. The castle subsequently served as the official seat of the Teutonic Order Masters. Elbląg became part of the Hanseatic League, which contributed much to the city's wealth. Through the Hansa agreement, the city was linked to other major ports like Danzig (nowadays Gdańsk), Lübeck and Amsterdam. Elbląg came under the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Poland in 1454 and after the defeat of the Teutonic Knights in the Thirteen Years' War was recognized as part of Poland in the Second Peace of Thorn in 1466. It then flourished and turned into a significant trading point, but its growth was eventually hindered by the Second Northern War and the Swedish Deluge.*

(**Note**) *Riga is the capital and largest city of Latvia and is largest city in the Baltic state. The city lies on the Gulf of Riga at the mouth of the Daugava river where it meets the Baltic Sea.* Riga was founded in 1201 and is a former Hanseatic League member.

*(**Note**) The Lübeck law was the family of codified municipal law developed at Lübeck. It was the second most prevalent form of municipal law in medieval and early modern Germany next to the Magdeburg Law. Lübeck Law provided for municipal self-government and self-administration yet did not negate dependence upon a lord, be it a bishop, duke, king or, in Lübeck's case, an emperor.*

Charlemagne, Pippin, and a ministerial clerk

*(**Note**) Ministerial Class - The ministeriales were a class of people raised up from serfdom and placed in positions of power and responsibility in the High Middle Ages in the Holy Roman Empire. The word and its German translations, Ministeriale(n) and Dienstmann, came to describe those unfree nobles who made up a large majority of what could be described as the German knighthood during that time. What began as an irregular arrangement of workers with a wide variety of duties and restrictions rose in status and wealth to become power brokers of an empire.*

In 1241 Lübeck, which had access to the Baltic and North seas' fishing grounds, formed an alliance—a precursor to the League—with Hamburg, another trading city, which controlled access to salt-trade routes from Lüneburg.

(**Note**) *The **Old Salt Route**, about 100 kilometres (62 mi), was a medieval route in northern Germany, linking Lüneburg (in Lower Saxony) with the port of Lübeck (in Schleswig-Holstein), which required more salt than it could produce itself. Lüneburg, first mentioned in the 10th century, grew rich on the salterns surrounding the town. Traders shipped salt via Lauenburg to Lübeck, which supplied all the coasts of the Baltic Sea. Lüneburg and its salt were major factors of power and wealth of the Hanseatic League. After a long period of prosperity, its importance declined after 1600. The last of the salt mines was closed in 1980, ending the thousand-year tradition.*

Medieval Hanseatic Fish Market

The allied cities gained control over most of the salt-fish trade, especially the Scania Market; Cologne joined them in the Diet of 1260. The towns raised their own armies, with each guild required to provide levies when needed. The Hanseatic cities came to the aid of one another, and commercial ships often had to be used to carry soldiers and their arms. Over the period, a network of alliances grew to include a flexible roster of 70 to 170 cities.

Cologne Germany around 1411

(**Note**) **Diet Of 1260:**

These regulations were promulgated by the League between 1260 and 1264 and were meant to apply to all cities governed by Lübeck's legal code. This would have applied to most German Baltic and North Sea towns. SOURCE: "Decrees of the Hanseatic League." In Thatcher, Oliver & Edgar McNeal, eds. A Source Book for Medieval History. New York & Chicago: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1905. pp. 611-612. Page 611 - We wish to inform you of the action taken in support of all merchants who are govered by the law of Lübeck.

(1) Each city shall, to the best of her ability, keep the sea clear of pirates, so that merchants may freely carry on their business by sea. (2) Whoever is expelled from one city because of a crime shall not be received in another. (3) If a citizen is seized [by pirates, robbers, or bandits] he shall not be ransomed, but his sword-belt and knife shall be sent to him [as a threat to his captors]. (4) Any merchant ransoming him shall lose all his possessions in all the cities which have the law of Lübeck. (5) Whoever is proscribed in one city for robbery or theft shall be proscribed in all. (6) If a lord besieges a city, no one shall aid him in any way to the detriment of the besieged city, unless the besieger is his lord. (7) If there is a war in the country, no city shall on that account injure a citizen from the other cities, either in his person or goods, but shall give him protection. (8) If any man marries a woman in one city, and another woman from some other city comes and proves that he is her lawful husband, he shall be beheaded. (9) If a citizen gives his daughter or niece in marriage to a man [from another city], and another man comes and says that she is his lawful wife, but cannot prove it, he shall be beheaded.

Page 612 - This law shall be binding for a year, and after that the cities shall inform each other by letter of what decisions they make.

In the West, cities of the Rhineland like Cologne enjoyed trading privileges in Flanders and England. In 1266 King Henry III of England granted the Lübeck and Hamburg Hansa a charter for operations in England, initially causing competition with the Westphalians. But the Cologne Hansa and the Wendish Hansa joined in 1282 to form the Hanseatic colony in London, although they didn't completely merge until the 15th century.

There were blockades against Novgorod in 1268 and 1277/1278. Nonetheless Westphalian traders continued to dominate trade on London and also Ipswich and Colchester, while Baltic and Wendish traders concentrated between King's Lynn and Newcastle upon Tyne. Much of the drive for co-operation came from the fragmented nature of existing territorial governments, which failed to provide security for trade.

Over the next 50 years, the merchant Hansa solidified with formal agreements for confederation and co-operation covering the west and east trade routes.[citation needed] Cities not only from the east modern day Low Countries, but also Utrecht, Holland, Zealand, Brabant, Namur and modern Limburg began to participate from the thirteenth century. This network of Hanseatic trading guilds is called the Kaufmannshanse in the historiography.

(**Note**) *Henry III (1 October 1207 – 16 November 1272), was King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Duke of Aquitaine from 1216 until his death in 1272. Henry assumed the throne when he was only nine in the middle of the First Barons' War. Cardinal Guala Bicchieri declared the war against the rebel barons to be a religious crusade and Henry's forces, led by William Marshal, defeated the rebels at the battles of Lincoln and Sandwich in 1217. Henry promised to abide by the Great Charter of 1225, a later version of the 1215 Magna Carta, which limited royal power and protected the rights of the major barons. In 1230, the King attempted to reconquer the provinces of France that had once belonged to his father, but the invasion was a debacle. A revolt led by William Marshal's son Richard broke out in 1232, ending in a peace settlement negotiated by the Church.*

(**Note**) *Novgorodian Land was one of the largest historical territorial–state formations in Russia, covering its northwest and north. During the period of greatest development, it reached north to the White Sea, and in the east it spread beyond the Ural Mountains. It had extensive trade relations within the framework of the Hanseatic League and with the rest of Rus'.*

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

ORGANIZATION

The Hanseatic League was a complex and loose-jointed constellation of protagonists pursuing their own interests, which coincided in a shared program of economic domination in the Baltic region, and by no means a monolithic organization or a 'state within a state'. It gradually grew from a network of merchant guilds to develop a more formal association of cities and was never even formed into a legal person.

(**Note**) *Hanseatic Seal of Stralsund Stralsund, officially the Hanseatic City of Stralsund, is the fifth-largest city in the northeastern German federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania after Rostock, Schwerin, Neubrandenburg and Greifswald, and the second-largest city in the Pomeranian part of the state. It is located on the southern coast of the Strelasund, a sound of the Baltic Sea separating the island of Rügen from the Pomeranian mainland. The canting arms of the city make reference to that etymology as well as to Stralsund's Hanseatic past in featuring a silver cross pattée (a Hanseatic Cross) above a silver arrow.*

The members of the Hanseatic League were Low German speaking merchants, with the exception of Dinant, whose towns were where these merchants held citizenship. Not all towns with Low German merchant communities were members of the league (e.g., Emden, Memel (today Klaipėda), Viborg (today Vyborg) and Narva never joined). However, Hansards could also come from settlements without German town law—the premise for league membership was birth to German parents, subjection to German law, and a commercial education. The league served to advance and defend the common interests of its heterogeneous members: commercial ambitions such as enhancement of trade, and political ambitions such as ensuring maximum independence from the noble territorial rulers.

(**Note**) *The German town law (German: Deutsches Stadtrecht) or German municipal concerns (Deutsches Städtewesen) was a set of early town privileges based on the Magdeburg rights developed by Otto I. The Magdeburg law became the inspiration for regional town charters not only in Germany, but also in Central and Eastern Europe who modified it during the Middle Ages. The German town law (based on the Magdeburg rights) was used in the founding of many German cities, towns, and villages beginning in the 13th century.*

Decisions and actions of the Hanseatic League were the result of a consensus-based procedure. If an issue arose, the league's members were invited to participate in a central meeting, the Tagfahrt (Hanseatic Diet, "meeting ride", sometimes also referred to as Hansetag), that some argue already happened around 1300 but were formalised since 1358; some date the first diet to 1356. The member communities then chose envoys (Ratssendeboten) to represent their local consensus on the issue at the Diet. Not every community sent an envoy; delegates were often entitled to represent a set of communities. Consensus-building on local and Tagfahrt levels followed the Low Saxon tradition of Einung, where consensus was defined as absence of protest: after a discussion, the proposals which gained sufficient support were dictated aloud to the scribe and passed as binding Rezess if the attendees did not object; those favouring alternative proposals unlikely to get sufficient support were obliged to remain silent during this procedure. If consensus could not be established on a certain issue, it was found instead in the appointment of a number of league members who were then empowered to work out a compromise.

The Hanseatic League was characterised by legal pluralism and the diets couldn't issue laws. But the cities cooperated to achieve limited trade regulation, like measures against fraud, or worked together on a regional level. There was also interest in harmonising maritime law, a long series of ordinances on maritime law was issued in the 15th and 16th centuries. The most extensive maritime ordinance was the Ship Ordinance and Sea Law of 1614, but it's dubious that it was ever enforced.

Hansetag in Lübeck

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

KONTORS

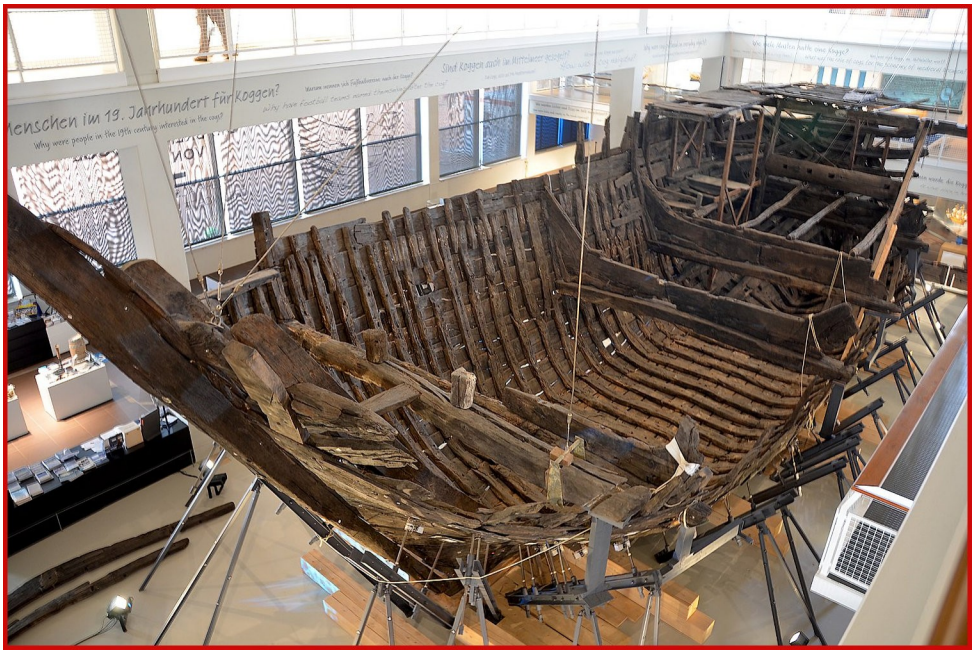
The Hanseatic Kontore, which operated like an early stock exchange, were settlements of Hansards and organised in the mid 14th century as private corporations that each had their own treasury, court, legislation and seal.They were probably established first to provide security, but also served to secure privileges and engage in diplomacy. The quality of goods was also examined at kontors, increasing the efficiency of trade, and the kontors served as bases to develop connections with local rulers and as sources of economic and political information. Most kontors were also physical locations containing several buildings, that were integrated and segregated from citylife to different degrees. The kontor of Bruges was an exception, it didn't acquire any buildings until the 15th century. Like the guilds, the Kontore were usually led by Ältermänner ("eldermen", or English aldermen). The Stalhof, as a special case, had a Hanseatic and an English alderman. In Novgorod the aldermen were replaced by a hofknecht in the 15th century. The kontors' statutes were read aloud to the present merchants once a year. In 1347 the Kontor of Bruges modified its statute to ensure an equal representation of the league's members. To that end, member communities from different regions were pooled into three circles (Drittel ("third [part]"): the Wendish and Saxon Drittel, the Westphalian and Prussian Drittel as well as the Gothlandian, Livonian and Swedish Drittel). The merchants from their respective Drittel would then each choose two aldermen and six members of the Eighteen Men's Council (Achtzehnmännerrat) to administer the Kontor for a set period of time.
In 1356, during a Hanseatic meeting in preparation of the first Tagfahrt, or one of the first, the league confirmed this statute.

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

HANSEATIC SHIPS

A number of different types of ships was used in the Hanseatic League for transport over sea and inland waters. The type that was the most used by the Hansa, and the most emblematic, was the cog. The cog was a multi-purpose clinker-built ship with carvel bottom, a stern rudder and a square rigged mast. Most cogs were privately owned merchant ships, but they were also used as warships. It was built in a variety of sizes and specifications and was used to navigate seas and rivers. They could be outfitted with castles starting from the thirteenth century. The cog was depicted on many seals and several coats of arms of Hanseatic cities, like Stralsund, Elbląg and Wismar. Several ship wrecks of cogs have been found. The most famous one is the well preserved Bremen cog. It could carry a cargo of about 125 tons.

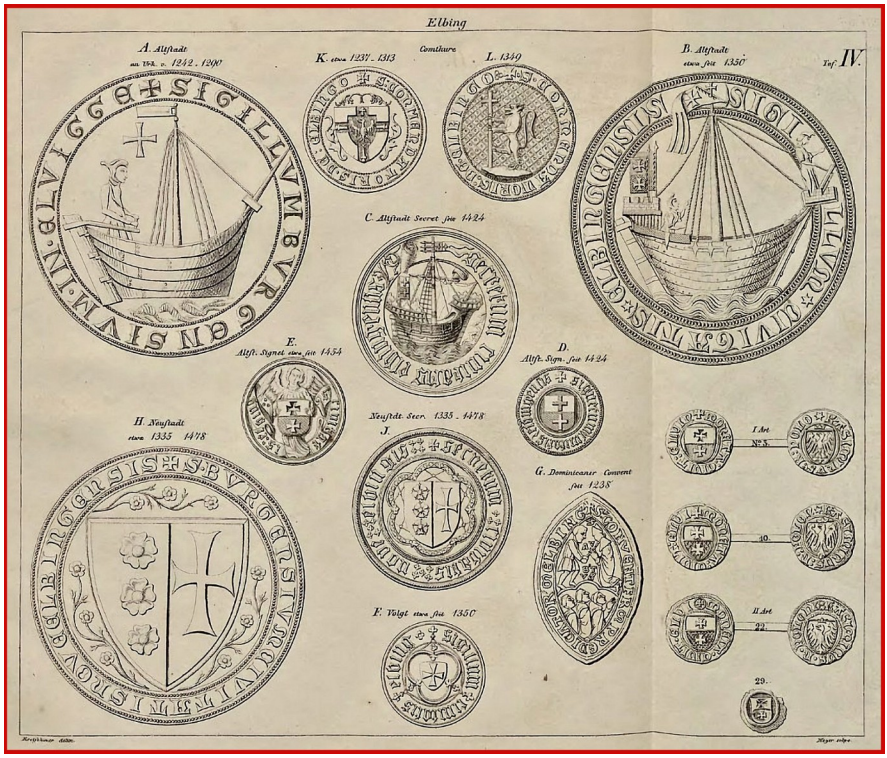
(**Note**) *Clinker built (also known as lapstrake) is a method of boat building in which the edges of hull planks overlap each other. Where necessary in larger craft, shorter planks can be joined end to end, creating a longer strake or hull plank.*



Bremen Cog

(**Note**) *The Bremen cog or Bremer Kogge is a well-preserved wreck of a cog dated to 1380, found in 1962 in Bremen. Today, it is displayed at the German Maritime Museum in Bremerhaven as one of the main features. Based on the den-drochronological analysis of the oak timber from which the cog was built, the ship was dated to about 1380 AD.*

Stralsund Cog Seal



Hanseatic Seals

Wismar Cog Seal

The hulk began to replace the cog by 1400 and cogs lost their dominance to them around 1450. The hulk was a bulkier ship that could carry larger loads; Elbl estimates they could carry up to 500 tons by the 15th century. It could be clinker or carvel-built. No archeological evidence of a hulk has been found.

(**Note**) *The name hulk may come from the Greek word holkas, meaning a towed boat, which would be consistent with the use of the hulk as a river barge. The word hulk also has a medieval meaning of "hollowed-out" or "husk-like" which is also apposite for the shape of the basic hulk. It is not clear when the hulk first appeared in medieval Europe. The hulk appears to have remained a relatively minor type of sailing ship apparently peculiar to the Low Countries of Europe where it was probably used primarily as a river or canal boat, with limited potential for coastal cruising. The only evidence of hulks is from legal documents and iconography, though it is possible that a shipwreck found on the coast of Estonia in early 2022 might be the only known surviving example of a hulk. Because of their widespread use by the Hanseatic League and English documents regarding trade, it is accepted by scholars that the hulk was predominantly a cargo vessel. It is also possible that hulks served as warships.*

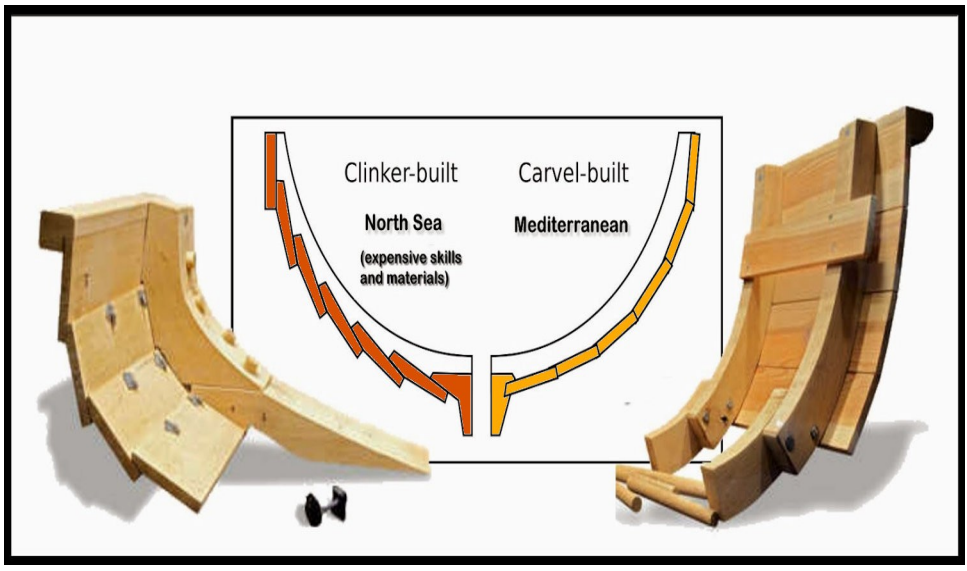
Model of the Peter von Danzig

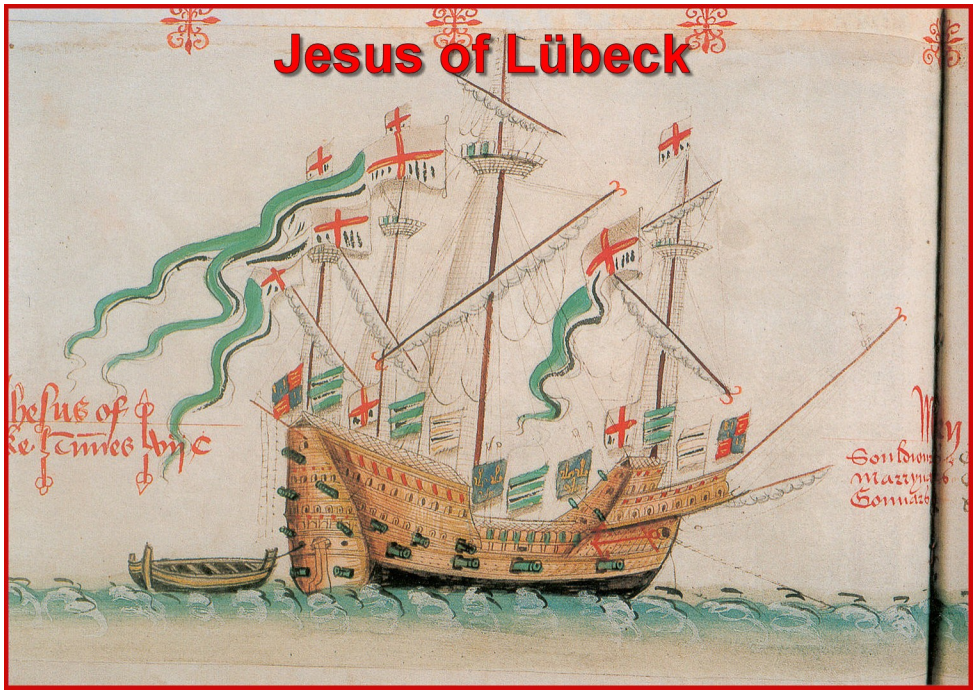
In 1464 Danzig acquired a French carvel ship through a legal dispute and renamed it the Peter von Danzig. It was 40 m long and had three masts, being one of the largest ships of its time.

Danzig adopted carvel construction around 1470, other cities also shifted to carvel type starting from this time. An example is the Jesus of Lübeck, later sold to England for use as a warship and slave ship.

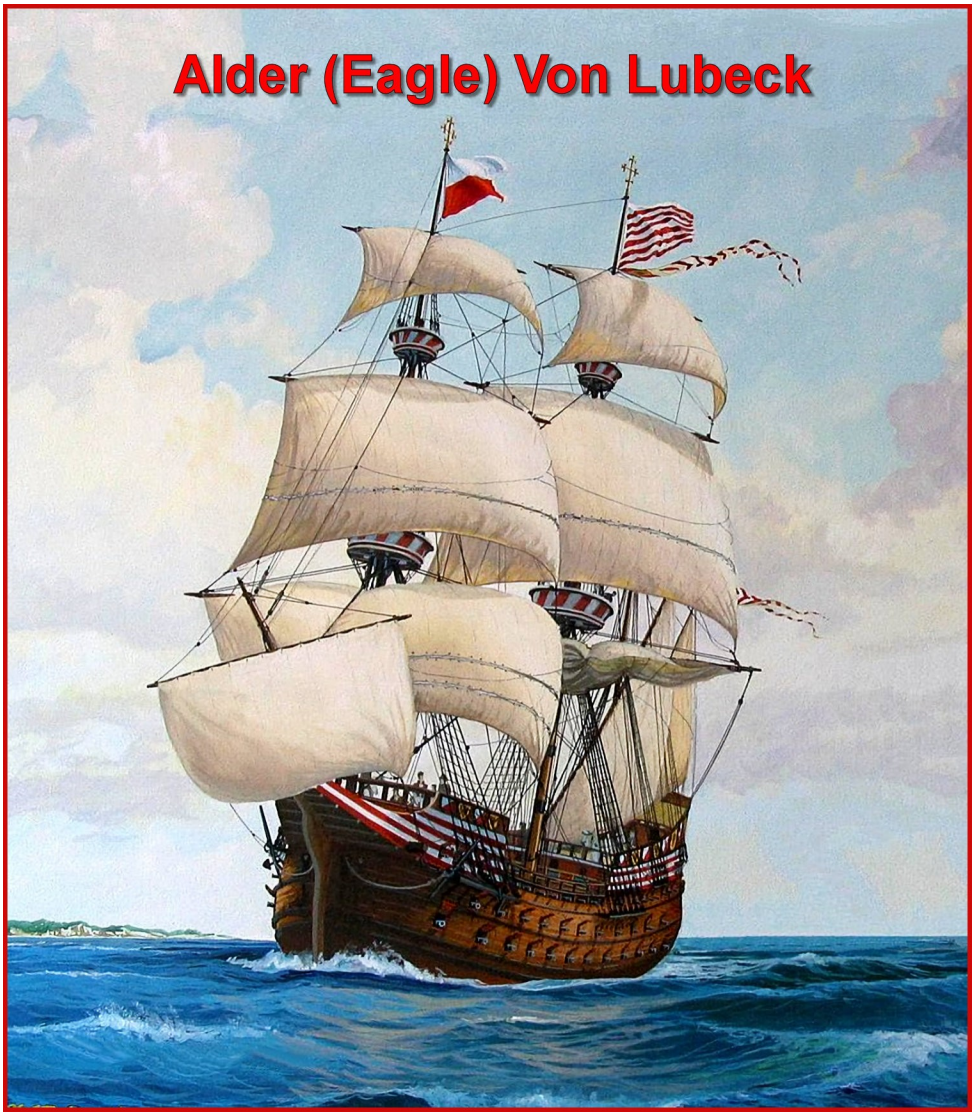
The galleonlike carvel warship Adler von Lübeck was constructed by Lübeck for military use against Sweden during the Northern Seven Years' War (1563–70), launched in 1566, but was never put to military use after the Treaty of Stettin. It was the biggest ship of its day at 78 m long and had four masts, including a bonaventure mizzen. It served as a merchant ship until it was damaged in 1581 on a return voyage from Lisbon and broken up in 1588.

*(***Note***) Peter von Danzig was a 15th-century ship of the Hanseatic League. Peter von Danzig was built on the French west coast, and originally named Pierre de la Rochelle or Peter van Rosseel. The ship arrived in Danzig in 1462, carrying sea salt from the Atlantic. While anchored at roadstead, she was damaged by lightning. The ship lay for a while in Danzig harbour, waiting to be repaired, but was then converted to a warship in 1469 after the Hanseatic league had declared war on England. Between August 1471 and 1473, Peter von Danzig operated in the North Sea under captain Paul Beneke, hunting English merchantmen with a letter of marque and securing Hanseatic league convoys. After the Treaty of Utrecht (1474), the ship undertook several trade trips abroad, before she appears to have been decommissioned in the late 1470s.*





(Note) *Jesus of Lübeck was built in the Free City of Lübeck in the early 16th century. Around 1540 the ship was acquired by Henry VIII to augment his fleet. The ship saw action during the French invasion of the Isle of Wight in 1545. She, along with Samson, was used in an unsuccessful attempt to raise Henry VIII's flagship, Mary Rose, after foundering during the Battle of the Solent. In 1563, it was chartered to a group of merchants by Queen Elizabeth I, involved in the Atlantic slave trade and smuggling under* ***John Hawkins****, who organized four slave voyages to West Africa and the West Indies between 1562 and 1568. During the last voyage, she encountered a Spanish fleet off San Juan de Ulúa (Vera Cruz, Mexico) in September 1568. In the resulting battle, Jesus was disabled and captured by Spanish forces. The heavily damaged ship was later sold for 601 ducats to a local merchant.*



(**Note**) *Adler von Lübeck (German for Eagle of Lübeck), also called Der Große Adler or Lübscher Adler, was a 16th-century warship of the Hanseatic city of Lübeck, Germany. Adler von Lübeck was one of the largest ships in the world at her time, being 78.30 m long overall and displacing 2–3,000 tons. The war galleon was built by Lübeck during the Northern Seven Years' War to escort her convoy of merchant ships in the Baltic and North Sea. However, Adler von Lübeck was never put into action, since Lübeck had already entered peace negotiations with Sweden at the time of the ship's completion. After the Treaty of Stettin (1570), Großer Adler was converted into a freighter for trade with the Iberian peninsula. The ship was dismantled in 1588 after twenty years of service.*

COMMERCIAL EXPANSION

The League succeeded in establishing additional Kontors in Bruges (Flanders), Bryggen in Bergen (Norway), and London (England) beside the Peterhof in Novgorod. These trading posts were institutionalised by the first half of the 14th century at the latest (for Bergen and Bruges) and, except for the Kontor of Bruges, became significant enclaves. The London Kontor, the Steelyard (Middle Low German stâlhof, German Stahlhof), stood west of London Bridge near Upper Thames Street, on the site now occupied by Cannon Street station. It grew into a significant walled community with its own warehouses, weighhouse, church, offices and houses, reflecting the importance and scale of trading activity on the premises.

In addition to the major Kontors, individual ports with Hanseatic trading outposts or factories had a representative merchant and warehouse. Often they were not permanently manned. In Scania, Denmark, there were around 30 Hanseatic seasonal factories for traders in salted herring, these were called vitten and were granted considerable legal autonomy to the extent that Burkhardt argues that they resembled a fifth kontor and would be seen as such if not for their early decline. The Scanian herring fairs drew large numbers from the Wendish towns, who consolidated the herring trade through an integral approach where they supplied their own salt, but also traders from elsewhere in Scandinavia or from the lands around the North Sea attended.

In England there were factories in Boston (the outpost was also called the Stalhof), Bristol, Bishop's Lynn (now King's Lynn, which features the sole remaining Hanseatic warehouse in England), Hull, Ipswich, Newcastle upon Tyne, Norwich, Scarborough, Yarmouth (now Great Yarmouth), and York, many of which were important for the Baltic trade and become centres of cloth industry in the late 14th century. Hansards and cloth manufacturers coordinated to make fabrics meet local demand and fashion in the traders' hometowns. Outposts in Lisbon, Bordeaux, Bourgneuf, La Rochelle and Nantes offered the cheaper Bay salt. Ships that plied this trade sailed home in the salt fleet. There were also trading posts in Flanders, Denmark-Norway, the Baltic interior, Upper Germany, Iceland and Venice. Starting with trade in coarse woollen fabrics, the Hanseatic League had the effect of bringing both commerce and industry to northern Germany. As trade increased, newer and finer woollen and linen fabrics, and even silks, were manufactured in northern Germany. The same refinement of products out of cottage industry occurred in other fields, e.g. etching, wood carving, armour production, engraving of metals, and wood-turning.

(**Note**) Many *merchants were welcomed in Bruges, such as the Castilian wool merchants in the 13th century. The Basques, from Bilbao, thrived as merchants (wool, iron, etc.) Foreign merchants expanded the city's trading zones.*

The league primarily traded beeswax, furs, timber, resin (or tar), flax, honey, wheat, and rye from the east to Flanders and England with cloth, in particular broadcloth, (and, increasingly, manufactured goods) going in the other direction.

(**Note**) *Broadcloth is a dense, plain woven cloth, historically made of wool. The defining characteristic of broadcloth is not its finished width but the fact that it was woven much wider (typically 50 to 75% wider than its finished width) and then heavily milled (traditionally the cloth was worked by heavy wooden trip hammers in hot soapy water) in order to shrink it to the required width. The effect of the milling process is to draw the yarns much closer together than could be achieved in the loom and allow the individual fibres of the wool to bind together in a felting process, which results in a dense, blind face cloth with a stiff drape which is highly weather-resistant, hard wearing and capable of taking a cut edge without the need for being hemmed.*

King Gustav II Adolf's dress of dark purple broadcloth and gold.

Gustavus Adolphus 1594 – 1632), also known in English as Gustav II Adolf or Gustav II Adolph, was King of Sweden from 1611 to 1632, and is credited with the rise of Sweden as a great European power.

Metal ore (principally copper and iron) and herring came southwards from Sweden, the Carpathians were another important source of copper and iron, often sold in Thorn. Lubeck also had a vital role in the salt trade; salt was acquired in Lunenburg or shipped from France and Portugal and sold on Central European markets, taken to Scania for salting herring or exported to Russia. Stockfish was traded from Bergen in exchange for grain; Hanseatic grain inflows allowed more permanent settlements further north in Norway. The league also traded in beer, with beer from Hanseatic towns the most valued, and Wendish cities like Lübeck, Hamburg, Wismar and Rostock developed export breweries for hopped beer.

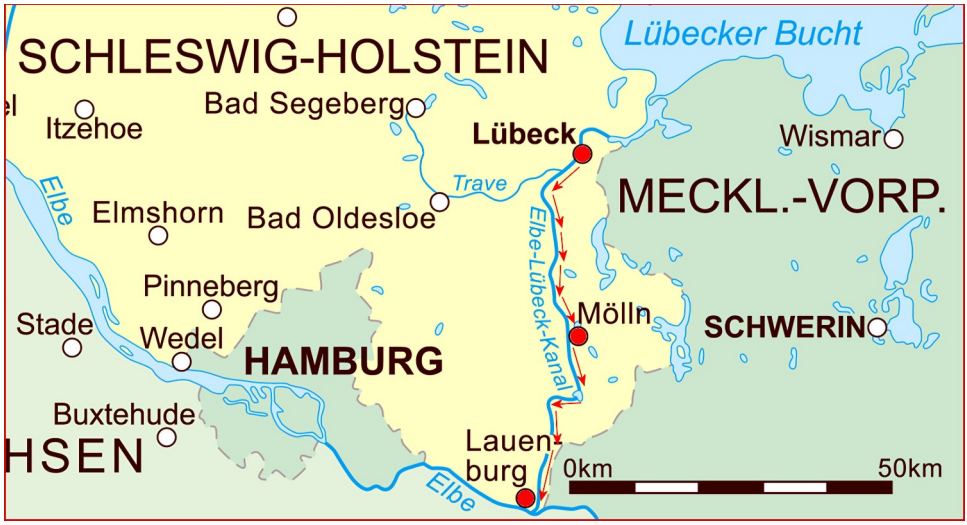
Thorn in 1641

(**Note**) *Toruń (Thorn) is a city on the Vistula River in north-central Poland and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Toruń is one of the oldest cities in Poland; it was first settled in the 8th century and in 1233 was expanded by the Teutonic Knights.*

For centuries it was home to people of diverse backgrounds and religions. From 1264 until 1411, Toruń was part of the Hanseatic League and by the 17th century a leading trading point, which greatly affected the city's architecture, ranging from Brick Gothic to Mannerist and Baroque.

In 1264 the adjacent New Town was founded predominantly to house Torun's growing population of craftsmen and artisans, who predominantly came from German-speaking lands. In 1280, the city (or as it was then, both cities) joined the mercantile Hanseatic League, and thus became an important medieval trade centre.

Hanseatic trade was not exclusively maritime trade, or even overwater trade. Most Hanseatic towns did not have immediate access to the sea and there were many that were linked to partners by river trade or even generally expensive land trade. These combined into an integrated network and many smaller Hanseatic towns had their main trading activity in subregional trade. Internal Hanseatic trade was in fact the Hanse's quantitatively most voluminous and important business. Trade over rivers and land was not tied to specific Hanseatic privileges, but sea ports like Bremen, Hamburg and Riga managed to dominate trade on their rivers. This was not possible for the Rhine where trade retained an open character. Digging canals for trade routes was very uncommon, but the Stecknitz Canal was built between Lübeck and Lauenburg from 1391 to 1398.



(**Note**) *The Stecknitz Canal (German: Stecknitzfahrt) was an artificial waterway in northern Germany which connected Lauenburg and Lübeck on the Old Salt Route by linking the tiny rivers Stecknitz (a tributary of the Trave) and Delvenau (a tributary of the Elbe), thus establishing an inland water route across the drainage divide from the North Sea to the Baltic Sea.*

Built between 1391 and 1398, the Stecknitz Canal was the first European summit-level canal and one of the earliest artificial waterways in Europe. In the 1890s the canal was replaced by an enlarged and straightened waterway called the Elbe–Lübeck Canal, which includes some of the Stecknitz Canal's watercourse.

The original artificial canal was 0.85 metres (33 in) deep and 7.5 metres (25 ft) wide; the man-made segment ran for 11.5 kilometres (7.1 mi), with a total length of 97 kilometres (60 mi) including the rivers it linked.

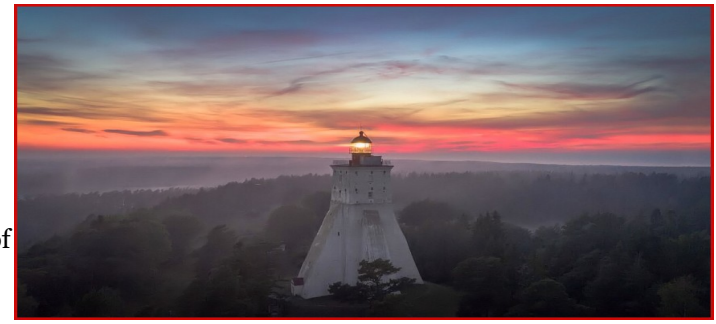
The canal included seventeen wooden locks (of which the Palmschleuse at Lauenburg still exists) that managed the 13-metre (43 ft) elevation difference between its endpoints and the highest central part, the Delvenaugraben.

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

PROTECTION and DEFENCE

The Hanseatic League, at first the merchant hansas and eventually its cities, relied on power to secure protection and gain and preserve privileges. Bandits and pirates were also persistent problems, during wars these could be joined by privateers. Traders could be arrested abroad and their goods could be confiscated. The league sought to codify protection; internal treaties established mutual defence and external treaties codified privileges. Many locals, merchant and noble alike, envied the power of the League and tried to diminish it. For example, in London, the local merchants exerted continuing pressure for the revocation of privileges. Most foreign cities confined the Hanseatic traders to certain trading areas and to their own trading posts. The refusal of the Hansa to offer reciprocal arrangements to their counterparts exacerbated the tension. The merchants of the Hanseatic League succeeded in using their economic power to pressure cities and rulers. It could call embargoes, redirect trade away from towns and even boycott entire countries. There were blockades against Novgorod in 1268 and 1277/1278. Bruges was pressured by moving temporarily the Hanseatic emporium to Aardenburg from 1280 to 1282, from 1307 or 1308 to 1310 and in 1350, to Dordt in 1358 and 1388, and to Antwerp in 1436. Boycotts against Norway in 1284 and Flanders in 1358 almost caused famines there. They sometimes resorted to their military might, several Hanseatic cities maintained their own warships and in times of need merchant ships could be repurposed. But military action against political powers often didn't involve the entire league. Instead an ad hoc coalition of stakeholders, called an alliance (tohopesate), was often formed. As an essential part of protecting their investment in ships and their cargoes, League members trained pilots and erected lighthouses, like the still working Kõpu Lighthouse, and other lights. Lübeck also erected in 1202 what's claimed to be the first lighthouse proper in northern Europe in Falsterbo. There were by 1600 at least 15 lights erected along the German and Scandinavian coasts making it the best lighted sea area then in the world, largely thanks to the Hansa.

Kõpu Lighthouse



It is one of the oldest lighthouses in the world, having been in continuous use since its completion in 1531. The lighthouse is built at the top of the highest hill of Hiiumaa island

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

ZENITH

The weakening of imperial power and imperial protection for merchants under the late Hohenstaufen dynasty forced the Hanseatic League to institutionalise into a co-operating network of cities with a fluid structure, called the Städtehanse in the historiography, but it never became a closely managed formal organisation and the Kaufmannshanse continued to exist by its side.

(**Note**) *The Hohenstaufen dynasty, also known as the Staufer, was a noble family of unclear origin that rose to rule the Duchy of Swabia from 1079, and to royal rule in the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages from 1138 until 1254. The dynasty's most prominent rulers – Frederick I (1155), Henry VI (1191) and Frederick II (1220) – ascended the imperial throne and also reigned over Italy and Burgundy. The non-contemporary name of 'Hohenstaufen' is derived from the family's Hohenstaufen Castle on the Hohenstaufen mountain at the northern fringes of the Swabian Jura, near the town of Göppingen. Under Hohenstaufen rule, the Holy Roman Empire reached its greatest territorial extent from 1155 to 1268. Hohenstaufen distinguished the 'high' (hohen) conical hill named Staufen in the Swabian Jura from the village of the same name in the valley below. The name 'Staufen derives from Stauf, meaning 'chalice'. This term was commonly applied to conical hills in Swabia during the Middle Ages. It is a contemporary term for both the hill and the castle.*

This development was delayed by the conquest of many Wendish cities by the Danish king Eric VI Menved or by their feudal overlords between 1306 and 1319 and the restriction of their autonomy. Assemblies of the Hanse towns met irregularly in Lübeck for a Hansetag (Hanseatic Diet), some argue from about 1300, while others date the first diet to 1356. But many towns chose not to attend nor to send representatives, and decisions were not binding on individual cities if their delegates were not included in the recesses; representatives would sometimes leave the Diet prematurely in an attempt to give their towns an excuse not to ratify decisions. Only a very small number of Hanseatic cities were free imperial cities or enjoyed comparable autonomy and liberties, but many cities temporarily gained limited autonomy from their overlords.

(**Note**) *Eric VI Menved (1274 – 13 November 1319) was King of Denmark (1286–1319). A son of King Eric V and Agnes of Brandenburg, he became king in 1286 at age 12, when his father was murdered on 22 November by unknown assailants. On account of his age, his mother ruled for him until 1294.*

Between 1361 and 1370 members of the league waged war against Denmark. Initially unsuccessful with a Wendish offensive, Prussian, Dutch and eventually Wendish towns in 1368 allied in the Confederation of Cologne, sacked Copenhagen and Helsingborg, and forced Valdemar IV, King of Denmark, and his son-in-law Haakon VI, King of Norway, to grant considerable incomes and influence over Øresund fortresses for 15 years in the subsequent peace treaty of Stralsund in 1370. It extended privileges in Scania to the wider Hanseatic League, too, including the towns of Holland and Zeeland. This favourable treaty marked the height of Hanseatic influence; for this period the Hanseatic League has in the past been called a "Northern European great power". The Confederation of Cologne lasted until 1385, the Øresund fortresses were returned to Denmark the same year.

(**Note**) *Eric VI Menved (1274 – 13 November 1319) was King of Denmark (1286–1319). A son of King Eric V and Agnes of Brandenburg, he became king in 1286 at age 12, when his father was murdered on 22 November by unknown assailants. On account of his age, his mother ruled for him until 1294. Valdemar could do little about the increasing power of the Hanseatic League which had already become a major power in the region. Even before the conclusion of the small conflict with King Magnus, Valdemar decided to attack the Swedish island of Gotland, specifically the town of Visby. He raised an army, loaded them onto ships and invaded Gotland in 1361. Valdemar fought the Gotlanders and defeated them in front of the city, killing 1800 men. The city surrendered, and Valdemar tore down part of the wall to make his entry. Once in possession, he set up three huge beer barrels and informed the city fathers that if the barrels weren't filled with silver and gold within three days, he would turn his men loose to pillage the town. To Valdemar's surprise the barrels were filled before nightfall of the first day passed. The churches were stripped of their valuables and the riches were loaded on Danish ships and carried home to Vordingborg, Valdemar's residence. Valdemar added "King of Gotland" to his title list. But his action against Visby, a member of the Hanseatic League, would have dire consequences later.*

After Valdemar's heir Olav died, a succession dispute erupted over Denmark and Norway between Albert of Mecklenburg, King of Sweden and Margaret I, Queen of Denmark. This was further complicated when Swedish nobles rebelled against Albert and invited Margaret. Albert hired privateers in 1392, the Victual Brothers. They and their descendants threatened maritime trade of the league between 1392 and the 1430s with their raids. From 1395 to 1398 Stockholm was ruled by a consortium of 7 Hanseatic cities under the release agreement for Albert of Mecklenburg, and enjoyed full Hanseatic trading privileges. The Victual Brothers still controlled Gotland in 1398, when it was conquered by the Teutonic Order with support from the Prussian towns; Gotland was transferred to Denmark in 1408. The grandmaster of the Teutonic Order was often seen as head of the Hanse (caput Hansae), not only abroad.

(**Note**) *In 1394 Visby was plundered by pirates known as the Vitalian Brotherhood or Victual Brothers. These were former privateers who had been recruited in 1392 by Albert of Mecklenburg, then King of Sweden, to wage war on his enemy Margaret of Denmark. When Albert's cause was lost, they turned to fighting for themselves. In 1394 they took over Visby and made it their base, for a few years doing so much damage to the Baltic trade that they nearly brought it to a stop. This 1405 wall painting in Bunge Church on Gotland is said to depict the pirates. The pledge of their adopted base of Gotland to the Teutonic Order by King Albert of Sweden led to Gotland's invasion and the destruction of Visby by Konrad von Jungingen and the Order in 1398. This disruption, the executions of some of their band in Hamburg, and the Hanseatic League's continuing effort to control and make safe trade on the Baltic Sea led to changing maritime influences and a decline of the band.*

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

RISE OF RIVAL POWERS

In the 15th century the League became more formally institutionalised and more regionalised. This was in part a response to challenges in governance or competition with rivals, but also a result of changes in trade. A slow shift occurred from Hanseatic cities' loose participation to formal recognition of membership, but only if a city's use of the Hanseatic privileges was controversial.

Russian principalities gained trading privileges in 1392 in Livonia and on Gotland in exchange for renewing the German privileges, after conflict since the 1380s. English traders also received trade privileges in Prussia with the treaties of Marienburg and became prominent in the trade there, after extended conflicts from the 1370s till the early 1400s. The importance of Hanseatic trade in England decreased during the 15th century.

The Hanseatic cities of Holland and Zealandic had participated in the Hansa as late as 1394, but in 1395 they were prevented from cooperation by feudal obligations to Albert I, Duke of Bavaria who warred against the Frisians. Their Hanseatic ties weakened and their economies started to develop in another direction. The economic reorientation was even more drastic when Holland and Zealand became between 1417 and 1432 slowly part of the Burgundian State.

Albert I. Duke of Bavaria

In the 15th century, tensions between the Prussian region and the "Wendish" cities (Lübeck and its eastern neighbours) increased. Lübeck was dependent on its role as centre of the Hansa, being on the shore of the sea without a major river. It was on the entrance of the land route to Hamburg, but this land route could be bypassed by sea travel around Denmark and through the Kattegat. Prussia's main interest, on the other hand, was the export of bulk products like grain and timber, which were very important for England, the Low Countries, and, later on, also for Spain and Italy. Lübeck was in financial troubles from 1403 and dissenting craftsmen established in 1405 a supervising committee of 60. A constitutional crisis broke out in 1408 when the committee of 60 rebelled and put a new town council in place. Similar revolts broke out in Wismar and Rostock and new town councils were establisged in 1410. The crisis was only ended in 1418 by compromise.

Eric of Pomerania succeeded Margaret of Denmark in 1412, sought to expand into Schleswig and Holstein and levied tolls at the Øresund. Hanseatic cities were divided initially, Lübeck tried to appease Eric while Hamburg supported the Schauenburg counts of Holstein. The Danish-Hanseatic War eventually began in 1426. After the Bombardment of Copenhagen, the Treaty of Vordingborg renewed the commercial privileges in 1435 but the Øresund tolls continued. Eric of Pomerania was deposed in 1438 or 1439 by Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In 1438 Lübeck took control of the Øresund toll for a while. This caused tension with Holland and Zeeland. The Sound tolls, and the later attempt of Lübeck to exclude the English and Dutch merchants from Scania, harmed the Scanian herring trade in the long term when the excluded regions began to develop their own herring industries.

In the Dutch–Hanseatic War (1438–1441), a privateer war mostly waged by Wendish towns, the merchants of Amsterdam sought and eventually won free access to the Baltic. Although the blockade of the grain trade hurt Holland and Zeeland more than Hanseatic cities, it was against Prussian interest to maintain it.

The economic crises of the late 15th century did not spare the Hansa. Nevertheless, its eventual rivals emerged in the form of the territorial states, whether new or revived. New vehicles of credit were imported from Italy.

A general trend over the 15th century was that the Hanseatic hometowns increasingly introduced new statures into the kontors' legislation, especially after 1474. Only the Bergen kontor grew more independent in this period.

Frederick II, Elector of Brandenburg, tried to assert authority over the Hanseatic towns Berlin and Cölln in 1442 and blocked all towns of Brandenburg from participating in Hanseatic diets. For some but not all Brandenburg towns this was the end of their Hanseatic involvement. In 1488 John Cicero, Elector of Brandenburg did the same to Stendal and Salzwedel in the Altmark.

In 1454, the year of the marriage of Elisabeth of Austria to King-Grand Duke Casimir IV Jagiellon of Poland-Lithuania, the towns of the Prussian Confederation rose up against the dominance of the Teutonic Order and asked Casimir IV for help. Gdańsk (Danzig), Thorn and Elbing became part of the Kingdom of Poland, (from 1466 to 1569 referred to as Royal Prussia, region of Poland) by the Second Peace of Thorn.

Poland in turn was heavily supported by the Holy Roman Empire through family connections and by military assistance under the Habsburgs. Kraków, then the capital of Poland, had a loose association with the Hansa. The lack of customs borders on the River Vistula after 1466 helped to gradually increase Polish grain exports, transported to the sea down the Vistula, from 10,000 short tons (9,100 t) per year, in the late 15th century, to over 200,000 short tons (180,000 t) in the 17th century. The Hansa-dominated maritime grain trade made Poland one of the main areas of its activity, helping Danzig to become the Hansa's largest city. The Polish kings soon began to reduce the towns' political freedoms.

The Griffin dukes of Pomerania from the middle of the fifteenth century began constant conflicts to bring the Pomeranian Hanseatic towns under their control. This was not very successful at first, but Bogislav X subjugated Stettin and Köslin and harmed the economy and restricted the independence of many other towns.

A major economic advantage for the Hansa was its control of the shipbuilding market, mainly in Lübeck and Danzig. The League sold ships throughout Europe.
When Flanders and Holland became part of the Duchy of Burgundy, Burgund Dutch and Prussian cities increasingly excluded Lübeck from their grain trade in the 15th and 16th century. Burgund Dutch demand for Prussian and Livonian grain grew in the late 15th century. These trade interests differed from Wendish interests, threatening political unity, but it also showed a trade where the Hanseatic system was unpractical. Hollandish freight costs were much lower than those of the Hansa, and the Hansa were excluded as middlemen. After several naval wars between Burgundy and the Hanseatic fleets, Amsterdam gained the position of leading port for Polish and Baltic grain from the late 15th century onwards. Nuremberg in Franconia developed an overland route to sell formerly Hansa-monopolised products from Frankfurt via Nuremberg and Leipzig to Poland and Russia, trading Flemish cloth and French wine in exchange for grain and furs from the east. The Hansa profited from the Nuremberg trade by allowing Nurembergers to settle in Hanseatic towns, which the Franconians exploited by taking over trade with Sweden as well. The Nuremberger merchant Albrecht Moldenhauer was influential in developing the trade with Sweden and Norway, and his sons Wolf Moldenhauer and Burghard Moldenhauer established themselves in Bergen and Stockholm, becoming leaders of the local Hanseatic activities.

King Edward IV of England reconfirmed the league's privileges in the Treaty of Utrecht despite the latent hostility, in part thanks to the significant financial contribution the League made to the Yorkist side during the Wars of the Roses of 1455–1487. Tsar Ivan III of Russia closed the Hanseatic Kontor at Novgorod in 1494 and deported its merchants to Moscow, in an attempt to reduce Hanseatic influence on Russian trade. At the time only 49 traders were at the Peterhof. The fur trade was redirected to Leipzig, taking out the Hansards; while the Hanseatic trade with Russia moved to Riga, Reval and Pleskau. When the Peterhof reopened in 1514, Novgorod wasn't a trade hub any longer. In the same period the burghers of Bergen tried to develop an independent intermediate trade with the northern population, against the Hansards' obstruction. The very existence of the League and its privileges and monopolies created economic and social tensions that often crept over into rivalries between League members.

END OF the HANSA

The development of the Transatlantic trade after the discovery of the Americas caused the remaining kontors' decline, especially in Bruges, because it centred on other ports. It also changed business practice to short-term contracts and made the Hanseatic model of privileged guaranteed trade outdated. The trends of local feudal lords asserting control over towns and suppressing their autonomy, and of foreign rulers repressing Hanseatic traders continued in the next century.

In the Swedish War of Liberation 1521-1523 the Hanseatic League was successful in opposition in an economic conflict it had over the trade, mining and metal industry in Bergslagen (the main mining area of Sweden in the 16th century) with Jakob Fugger (early extremely rich industrialist in the mining and metal industry on the continent) and his unfriendly business take-over attempt. Fugger allied with his financially dependent pope Leo X, Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor and Christian II of Denmark/Norway. Both sides made huge costly investments in support of larger amounts of expensive hired mercenaries to win the war. After the war Gustav Vasa's Sweden and Frederick I's Denmark pursued independent policies and didn't support Lübeck's effort against Dutch trade.

However, Lübeck under Jürgen Wullenwever overextended in the Count's Feud in Scania and Denmark and lost influence in 1536 after Christian III's victory. Lübeck's attempts at forcing competitors out of the Sound eventually alienated even Gustav Vasa. Its influence in the Nordic countries began to decline. The Hanseatic towns of Guelders were obstructed in the 1530s by Charles II, Duke of Guelders. The strict Catholic Charles objected to the Lutheranism, in his words "Lutheran heresy", of Lübeck and other north German cities. This frustrated but did not end the towns' Hanseatic trade and there was a small resurgence later.

Later in the 16th century, Denmark-Norway took control of much of the Baltic Sea. Sweden had regained control over its own trade, the Kontor in Novgorod had closed, and the Kontor in Bruges had become effectively moribund because the Zwin inlet was closing up. Finally, the growing political authority of the German princes constrained the independence of the Hanse's towns.

The league attempted to deal with some of these issues: it created the post of syndic in 1556 and elected Heinrich Sudermann to the position, who worked to protect and extend the diplomatic agreements of the member towns. In 1557 and 1579 revised agreements spelled out the duties of towns and some progress was made.

The Bruges Kontor moved to Antwerp in 1520 and the Hansa attempted to pioneer new routes. However the league proved unable to prevent the growing mercantile competition. In 1567, a Hanseatic League agreement reconfirmed previous obligations and rights of league members, such as common protection and defense against enemies. The Prussian Quartier cities of Thorn, Elbing, Königsberg and Riga and Dorpat also signed. When pressed by the King of Poland–Lithuania, Danzig remained neutral and would not allow ships running for Poland into its territory. They had to anchor somewhere else, such as at Pautzke (Puck).

The Antwerp Kontor, moribund after the Fall of Antwerp, closed in 1593. In 1597 Queen Elizabeth of England expelled the League from London, and the Steelyard closed and sequestered in 1598. The Kontor was returned in 1606 under King James but it couldn't recover. The Bergen Kontor continued until 1754; of all the Kontore, only its buildings, the Bryggen, survive. Not all states tried to suppress their cities' former Hanseatic links; the Dutch Republic encouraged its eastern former members to maintain ties with the remaining Hanseatic League. The States-General relied on those cities in diplomacy at the time of the Kalmar War. The Thirty Years War was destructive for the Hanseatic League and members suffered heavily from both the imperials, the Danes and the Swedes. At the beginning, Saxon and Wendish faced attacks because of the desire of Christian IV of Denmark to control the Elbe and Weser. Pomerania had a very strong population decline. Sweden took Bremen-Verden (excluding the city of Bremen), Swedish Pomerania (including Stralsund, Greifswald, Rostock) and Swedish Wismar, preventing their cities from participating in the League, and controlled the Oder, Weser and Elbe, and could levy tolls on their traffic. The league became increasingly irrelevant despite its inclusion in the Peace of Westphalia.

In 1666, the Steelyard in London was burned down by the Great Fire of London. The Kontor-manager sent a letter to Lübeck appealing for immediate financial assistance for a reconstruction. Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck called for a Hanseatic Day in 1669. Only a few cities participated and those who came were very reluctant to contribute financially to the reconstruction. It was the last formal meeting, without any of the parties knowing it would be the last. The Hansa was never formally disbanded. It simply disintegrated and petered out silently.

MEDIEVAL MERCHANTS of the HANSEATIC LEAGUE

AFTER DISINTEGRATION

The Hanseatic League, however, lived on in the public mind. Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen continued to attempt common diplomacy, although interests had already diverged by the Peace of Ryswick. The Hanseatic Republics were able to jointly perform some diplomacy. Three cities had a common "Hanseatic" representation in Berlin until 1920. Three kontors also remained, often unused. The Peterhof was closed in the 16th century. Bryggen was sold to Norwegian owners in 1754. The Steelyard in London and the Oostershuis in Antwerp were long impossible to sell. The Steelyard was finally sold in 1852 and the Oostershuis, closed in 1593, was sold in 1862. Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck remained as the only members until the League's formal end in 1862. Despite its collapse, they still cherished the link to the Hanseatic League. Hamburg and Bremen continue to style themselves officially as "free Hanseatic cities", with Lübeck named "Hanseatic City". For Lübeck in particular, this anachronistic tie to a glorious past remained important in the 20th century. In 1937, the Nazi Party revoked its imperial immediacy through the Greater Hamburg Act. Since 1990, 24 other German cities have adopted the title of “Hanseatic City”.

END – “Medieval Merchants Of The Hanseatic League”

About the Author

Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter.

As a wrangler on the "Great American Horse Drive", at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.

His book, "The Oldest Greenhorn", chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the "Gate-to-Gate" trophy belt buckle the hard way, on the hurricane deck of a fiery red quarterhorse that proved what the term "prancing horse" really means!

Other books published by Larry W Jones:

1. A Squirrel Named Julie and The Fox Ridge Fox
2. The Painting Of A Dream
3. The Boy With Green Thumbs and The Wild Tree Man
4. Red Cloud – Chief Of the Sioux
5. Spotted Tail – The Orphan Negotiator
6. Little Crow – The Fur Trapper's Patron
7. Chief Gall – The Strategist
8. Crazy Horse – The Vision Quest Warrior
9. Sitting Bull - The Powder River Power
10. Rain-In-The-Face – The Setting Sun Brave
11. Two Strike – The Lakota Club Fighter
12. Chief American Horse – The Oglala Councilor
13. Chief Dull Knife – The Sharp-Witted Cheyenne
14. Chief Joseph – Retreat From Grande Ronde
15. The Oregon Trail Orphans
16. Kids In Bloom Volume 1
17. Kids In Bloom Volume 2
18. Kids Animal Pals Volume 1
19. Kids Animal Pals Volume 2
20. Bird Kids Volume 1
21. Bird Kids Volume 2
22. Garden Kids Volume 1
23. Garden Kids Volume 2
24. Folklore Of Jackson Hole
25. Henny Penny Meets Chicken Little
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34. The Jungle Book – The White Seal
35. The Jungle Book – Rikki-Tikki-Tavi
36. The Jungle Book – Toomai of the Elephants
37. The Jungle Book – Her Majesty's Servants
38. The Oldest Greenhorn – Second Edition
39. Life On The Mississippi
40. Songs Of The Seas
41. Treasure Island
42. The Wind In The Willows
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45. The Secret Garden
46. Heidi
47. Cynthia Ann Parker – Comanche Bride

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51. Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea
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53. Ode To Toulee – From Gosling To Goose
54. China Clipper – Floatplanes Of Pan Am
55. Images Of Old England
56. Range Of A Cowboy
57. Clipper Ships – Emigrants Passage
58. Clipper Ships – Wool and Wealth
59. Clipper Ships – Iron Maidens
60. Clipper Ships – The Kiwi Connection
61. Chief War Eagle – Peacemaker Of The Sioux
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64. Heritage Of An Indian Boy
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66. Davy Crockett Of the Wild Frontier
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69. Shackleton – Polar Quest
70. Death Valley Days – The Manly Trail
71. Pocahontas – Powhatan Princess
72. Tecumseh – The Roaming Cherokee
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74. Otaheite 1769 – Log Of Captain Cook
75. How Texas Got Its Shape
76. First Nations – Eskimo
77. Pontiac and the Ottawa Wars
78. Last Of The Wampanoag
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103. Chief Manuelito – NAVAJO
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105. Philippine History – From Magellan To Mindanao
106. Expedition Of Sieur de LaSalle
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109. Michelangelo – Renaissance Man
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111. Winnie-The-Pooh and Friends He Knew
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118. Riding Along the Salt Grass Trail
119. Day Of the Double Sun - The Manhattan Project
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123. Cofachiqui - Paramount Princess
124. Chief Powhatan - Tidewater Titan
125. Chief Shabbona – Bear Of Kankanee
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132. Texas Rangers - The Making Of A Ranger
133. Texas Rangers - Clash With Indians
134. Texas Rangers - The Mason County War
135. Texas Rangers - The Outlaw Sam Bass
136. Texas Rangers - Fight With Apaches
137. Texas Rangers - Chief Victorio
138. Texas Rangers - Last Fight With Apaches
139. Texas Rangers - Last Scoutings
140. Concorde – On The Wings Of Time

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142. Captains Courageous – Call Of The Grand Banks Cod
143. The Wilderness Canoe
144. Lifeboats Of Cape Cod - The Monomoy Disaster
145. Lady In the Strange South Seas
146. Perils Of the Sea - Ironclad Disasters
147. Bully Hayes the Blackbirder
148. Pike's Peak Gold Rush - One Miner's Account

All his publications are available on Lulu.com